

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1-2, 4-7, 9-10, and 12-25 are currently pending. Claims 1-2, 4, and 9-10 have been amended. Claims 13-25 have been added. Claim 11 has been cancelled. Claims 3 and 8 were previously cancelled in previous amendments.

§ 102 and § 103 Rejections

Claims 1-2, 4-5, 7, and 9-12 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by Japanese Publication No. 11-155998 A to Fujii (“Fujii”) or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as allegedly being obvious over Fujii in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,580,055 to Hagiwara (“Hagiwara”).

Claim 6 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Fujii.

The Present Invention

The present invention solves a unique problem in a gaming machine that has a transmissive display located in front of a variable display device, such as mechanical reels. The transmissive display device, which includes a liquid crystal display, typically has openings through which the symbols on the variable display device are seen by the player when the variable display device is being used in the game. When the liquid crystal display is in use and displaying video images, it is beneficial to provide backlighting to the liquid crystal display so as to enhance the viewing of the video images appearing thereon. The backlighting can be provided by a light guide plate located behind the liquid crystal display. But, that light guide plate needs to have openings through which the symbols on the variable display can be seen. Accordingly, in those openings, there is less backlighting for the liquid crystal display, which causes a non-uniform display of the video images across the entire region of the liquid crystal display. In fact,

a player may be able to look through these openings within the liquid crystal display and see dark regions 9321 (FIGS. 13 and 15) at the far sides of the variable display device. Paragraph 10 of the specification describes some of these problems.

To overcome problems, the present invention involves the use of an “image display assistance device,” as stated in claim 1 (e.g., a reflector 1320 in FIG. 12). The image display assistance device may serve two related functions -- (i) remove the dark regions 9321 to enhance the viewing of video images on the liquid crystal display, and (ii) reflect light toward the openings in the light guide plate (the openings have less backlighting) to provide more backlighting for the liquid crystal display in the regions of those openings, which also enhances the viewing of video images on the liquid crystal display. See paragraph 56.

The Applied Prior Art

None of the applied prior art addresses the problems that the present invention overcomes because they do not involve gaming machines that includes an “image display device.” All the claims have been amended to make it clear that the “image display device” (or “second display device” in claim 10) includes a liquid crystal display that provides “video images.” Fujii has been cited to allegedly show this “image display device” with reference to Fujii’s item 11. However, item 11 is the cover glass for the gaming machine. It provides no video images. It simply includes colored artwork 11a on its outer surface that may help to define display windows 20a, 20b, 20c through which images of the mechanical reels are seen by the player.

Accordingly, the prior art fails to teach several claim elements within each of the independent claims. It also fails to suggest problems that are overcome by the present invention, much less the solutions of the present invention. As such, the current rejections cannot stand.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner issue an allowance for the pending claims.

Conclusion

The Applicants believe that all of the pending claims are allowable and action towards that end is earnestly requested. If there are any matters which may be resolved or clarified through a telephone interview, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned attorney at the number indicated.

Fees of \$810 for the RCE, \$130 for the one-month extension of time and \$104 for extra claims are being paid via the deposit account listed below upon submission of this response. It is believed that no additional fees are due; however, should any other fees be required (except for payment of the issue fee), the Commissioner is authorized to deduct the fees from Nixon Peabody LLP Deposit Account No. 50-4181, Order No. 247079-000770USPT.

Respectfully submitted,

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